

THE TORNADO CONNECTION

IHS SCHEDULES FOR NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

by Olivia Porneluzi

Scheduling for the 2021-2022 school year for seventh, eighth, and ninth graders started on March 1. Along with scheduling for different classes, students chose from three different modes of instruction. The school board has also finalized the decision for a nine period day for the Butler Intermediate High School, and as in year's past, ninth grade students will also have the option to enroll in the College Tech Prep Program.

The Butler Intermediate High School will be operating on a nine period bell schedule, starting in the 2021-2022 school year. While this new schedule may seem intimidating to students, it does not make the school day or classes longer. Prior to the pandemic, the school day started at 7:30, but for the 2020-2021 school year, it started at 8:00. Next year, the school day will begin at 7:30 again. The additional period in the day will allow students to take required electives, desired electives, and their core classes.

Cont. on pg. 3



STUDENTS SOAR AT BIHS

by Maggie Lucas

SOAR is our school's PBIS program that helps to reinforce positive behaviors and a community atmosphere at the Intermediate High School. The acronym SOAR stands for safety, ownership, attitude, and respect, and the SOAR program tries to put those words into action through lessons, rewards, and school activities.



SOAR CONT.

A group of administrators and teachers serve on the various SOAR committees within our building. On the committee each person also has a specific job. For example, Mr. Rock, a history teacher, is the communication officer. Other staff members compile data, work on student and staff rewards, or develop Tornado Time lessons to reinforce positive behaviors. Two instrumental members of these committees are the assistant principal, Mrs. Crissman, and music teacher, Mrs. Waseleski.

Twice a week during activity period, students in all three grades participate in Tornado Time. The SOAR committee creates a series of videos and slide presentations for teachers to share with their students during the 20 minute lessons. In order to decide what types of behaviors need to be reinforced, the committee collects data from discipline referrals. If it appears as if most undesirable behavior appears in lunch, the committee develops a lesson about lunchtime expectations for the teachers to review with students. For example, during the month of January, the data revealed that students were not staying attentive during Google meets. Some students were logging in and then ignoring the lessons. As a result, the teachers shared a lesson on expectations during online learning. Mrs. Crissman said, "Every month we simply just have to see what students are having the most trouble with and just base that month's lesson off of the data."

In addition to the video lessons developed by the committee, Tornado Time also utilizes lessons from the Second Step program, an online social-emotional learning curriculum that addresses topics like problem solving, goal setting, and overcoming adversity. The SOAR committee provides teachers with a calendar that details which lessons should be taught each day.

Beyond the Tornado Time lessons, the SOAR program rewards students who meet expectations and are a positive influence on other students. Last year, rewards included assemblies and large group activities, but new health and safety regulations have limited many of those rewards. The committee has had to adjust the programs in many ways. One example is the golden tickets. Last year, teachers recognized one to two students a week with physical tickets, that the students then took to the library to earn a prize and enter a drawing for a larger prize. Mrs. Waseleski said, "If a student would maybe hold open a door for someone or help them pick up their books and a teacher noticed, the student would receive a golden ticket." This year the committee has changed the golden tickets to be virtually received. Now, if the student is caught doing something good, the staff member would just email the SOAR drawing organizers and the student's name is entered into the drawing. The SOAR committee then creates a video with a virtual prize wheel where student winners are selected.

Just like the tickets, the prizes have had to be adjusted due to COVID restrictions. The prizes this year have been adjusted to winning gift cards from Amazon and other places. The students can also pick a free snack at lunch. Mrs. Waseleski added, "Instead of winners reporting to the library, the teacher committee goes to the student's classroom with their reward. The students mostly pick the gift cards; they are a favorite of most everyone."



SCHEDULING CONT.

According to Mr. Dobransky, "We want students to take classes that they need, want, and will benefit from." All seventh grade students will have two periods of English and two periods of math. All eighth graders will have two periods of English. This will offer more enrichment opportunities for students, especially since math and English seem to be the two classes that benefit students the most.

Ninth graders will not have double-period block classes, but they will have an opportunity to take more electives. Periods 1-7 will become 40 minutes long, and periods 8-9 will be 42 minutes long. There will no longer be the 20-minute activity period at the beginning of seventh period. This will allow the Intermediate to match the Senior High School schedule, even though the Senior High will not have nine periods. There are many students at the Senior High that take shop electives at the Intermediate, so having some classes 40 minutes and some 42 will help us accommodate the Senior High students. Mr. Dobransky hopes that this new schedule will "benefit students in the best way possible."

Students will be able to choose one of three attendance models for the 2021-2022 school year. The first one is traditional schooling, in which students will attend school live and in-person five days a week. The second option is a virtual-asynchronous model of schooling. The Virtual Program combines an asynchronous setting with the addition of a live support when needed. This model will primarily use Edgenuity, the cyber platform for cyber students this year. Edgenuity is an app used this year for virtual students, but students will use Google Classroom for some courses. Students will be required to maintain a steady pace in their work and may be expected to attend some scheduled live stream sessions. The Virtual Program offers the flexibility of a self-paced course combined with live teacher support that will help all students be successful. The third and final option is Virtual Live, which is a combination of scheduled synchronous and asynchronous. This option of schooling will use Edgenuity and Google Classroom with scheduled regular live sessions. Virtual Classroom students will have the opportunity to interact with their teachers and classmates during their live sessions, which will be scheduled on set days and times. The Virtual Live will follow the regular school day and calendar.

There are many things for students and parents to consider when scheduling for next year. One of these is that for some students, some of the courses could be challenging. According to Mr. Dobransky, "You should take the toughest courses you can be successful in." Students are advised to take a wide variety of classes. When scheduling, students receive a form to fill out with the classes they want to take next year and turn in to their history teacher. According to Mr. Dobransky, "Since there are some students who are full time remote and do not come into school at all, their schedules will be entered by a guidance counselor or principal."

Mr. Dobransky suspects that most students will want to return to full time in person schooling. Cyber students who have not come into school at all this year, will have to make some adjustments if they choose to come back next year, such as learning to get up early again. Students miss the in-person interactions they can have with their teachers and friends. "When it is safe to return to school, they will come back," he said.

Having an orientation for incoming seventh graders is very significant, as it helps them meet their teachers and learn their way around their new school building. This orientation usually happens in August, a week or two before the school year starts. The school district hopes to have an orientation for seventh graders this year for the coming school year, but due to the pandemic and the restrictions that have been put in place because of it, the orientation could possibly be virtual.

SCHEDULING CONT.

Instructional Technology Liaison Megan Ratica is developing a program that will have all the information that students would normally get during the orientation on it. Instead of having staff members coming into different classrooms, there will be an interactive presentation on Google Slides for students and parents.

It is an exciting year for eighth graders, who will be ninth graders in a matter of months, due to the fact that they can enroll in the College Tech Prep Program, a program offered to students who get an average grade of a C and up. Students who enroll in CTP and remain in good standing are guaranteed admission to a growing list of college programs in the area. The program offers elective classes such as engineering, computers, and communications, along with core classes, which are: math, science, and English classes. The College Tech Prep core classes have a difficulty level between academic and honors classes.

According to the College Tech Prep Program coordinator, Shannon McGraw, "The students work on communication skills, problem solving, and teamwork." There is no downside to enrolling in the program. Students can receive college credits and be exposed to certain careers they might be interested in. As stated by Mrs. McGraw, "Some students may find it hard to know what they want to do in the future, which makes it difficult to select classes that will benefit them." If students find out that the electives they are taking will not benefit them, they could switch to another elective class. According to Shannon, "The College Tech Prep classes allow students to shape ideas of careers, help students find possible careers, and rule out others."

If students have any questions about scheduling for next year, they are advised to go to their core department teachers, which are the teachers in charge of the math, science, history, and English classes for each grade, and discuss with them what classes they want to take, and whether or not students will be successful in those classes.

SWIM TEAM LAPS THE COMPETITION

By Rylee Pflugh

Swimmers in Butler can start competing at the age of 6, well before they are old enough to compete in varsity swimming at the high school. All this hard work prepares them for the intense practices and expectations in ninth grade.

The varsity swimmers' practices differ depending on what day it is. Emma Pflugh, one of the team members said, "The practices can differ. The coach sometimes lets us go early or keeps us working overtime, but typically practices are two hours."

The swim members think that their coach gives the team hard sets or long sets. In swimming a set is a series of swims repeating the same distance and amount of time allocated. Meghan Reay added, "Sometimes our sets are so hard that some of the best swimmers have to sit out. This is so rare though." The coach added some thoughts on this. He stated, "When my team practices, I always have sets written down, so I never forget them. When coaches make sets, we think of things that we know our swimmers can do and not be dying when they are done."

SWIM TEAM CONT.

The team has been participating in swim meets with a few additional precautions. Emma Pflugh stated, "I like being able to go to different schools and meet new people that have the same interests as me. The swimmers from the other schools are always so nice and really good athletes." The people at the meets still take precautions such as wearing masks and trying to socially distance. This way, everyone can still practice and hang out. Some people have really found a light in this crisis in swimming. Meghan Reay said, "The meets are fun and a nice way to get up and get going for the time being because we have been at home and quarantining."

There are many different ways that the team has been keeping COVID out of the water. The one big guideline is masking. Everyone has to wear one unless they are about to step up to the board. Emma said, "The nice thing about masks is it is keeping you safe from nasty germs and keeps your face warm when you get out of the cold pool." She added, "The masks are not the worst thing that we are doing, but wearing them as soon as you get out of the pool from doing a hard thing for a meet is so tough." The swimmers put their masks in a plastic bag on the side of the diving board so it does not sit on the gross floor and is safe from getting wet. No one on the team has been exposed yet, so the precautions seem to be working.



COVID VACCINE IMPACTS THE WORLD

By Noah Ernst

COVID-19 vaccines have been rolling out slowly to people around the world. Teachers in Butler have been anxiously waiting for their turn to be vaccinated, and it looks like it is finally time. Butler teachers will receive the Johnson and Johnson vaccine offered to Pennsylvania K-12 educators as early as this week.

Mrs. Pat Fisher, a retired teacher, had some thoughts on the vaccine. "I got the vaccine because why would I want to give it to someone else?" She mentioned that finding a place to give her the vaccine was easy because her daughter found it for her. She added, "If someone was scared to get the vaccine because of side effects, I would tell them that getting the vaccine is way less pain than getting COVID-19 itself." Mrs. Fisher feels that teachers should be vaccinated to get the schools running five days a week and because all of the teachers do so much work and are vulnerable to so many things.

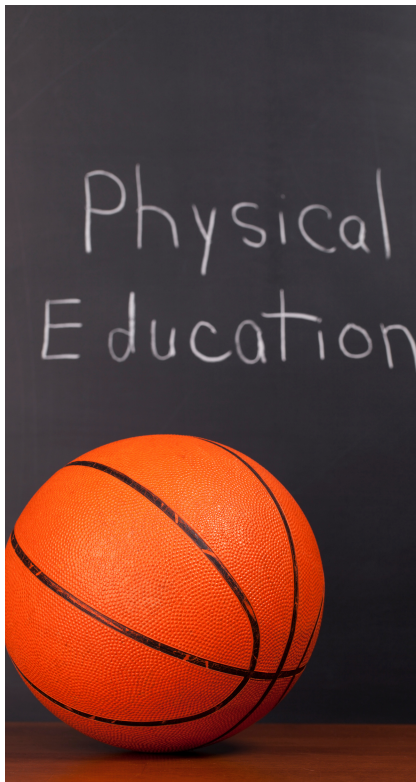
In discussing the vaccine for kids, she said, "I really don't know how quickly the kid vaccine will come out, but I guess it just depends on how quickly they can test it." Her thoughts on what will happen if most people get vaccinated were, "If everyone gets the vaccine, everything will probably go back to normal because then people can't get or give COVID-19. People don't really go out as much now, but since I have the vaccine, I will probably go out a lot more."

VACCINE CONT.

Mrs. Mary Ernst, a recently retired teacher and a school parent had similar thoughts on the vaccine. "Out of everyone in the world who should get their vaccine first, I believe that seniors, people with underlying medical conditions, and teachers should get the vaccine first." She also had some interesting thoughts on school options for families moving forward. "Even if they have all the kids get the vaccine, I still think there will be a choice for families if they want to stay online or go to school."

A teacher still teaching, Mrs. Dawnielle Minch, had some very similar thoughts to everyone else. "As teachers we have been anxious to get vaccinated, but Dr. White always has the best interest of the students and teachers in mind. He has been in touch with leadership at local hospitals so that our staff could be ready as soon as our turn came." Again, she agreed on who should be vaccinated first. "People 65 and up should be the first to get the vaccine because they are the most likely to die from COVID-19."

During the first week of March, the governor moved the teachers to 1A and said that they will be first to receive the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Dr. White sent out a survey from the Intermediate Unit, asking teachers if they would like an appointment. Teachers will then be notified of their appointment for some time in early March. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine was just recently approved for use in the United States, and it only requires one dose, unlike Pfizer and Moderna that require two.



PHYS ED KEEPS STUDENTS MOVING

by Lorna Carothers and Brooke Yost

The physical education teachers have had to alter their class activities to accommodate current health and safety guidelines, but they are still trying their best to get the students moving and having fun.

A typical day in gym class starts off with attendance and discussing what will happen that day. The teachers will sit down and explain to the livestreamers what they need to do. The students then spread out throughout the gym and start their activity for that day. According to Mrs. Kuharic, they try to vary the activities so the students don't get bored. "We do some HIIT workouts, line dancing, stretching, and yoga," she said.

According to Mr. Stoner, "Gym creates a great break in the day to stop staring at your computer all day and get up and move around. It gets your blood flowing and heart pumping which will make you stronger and healthier."

PHYS ED CONT.

Studies show that physical education class helps to strengthen your immune system and prevent diseases. In addition, exercise is good for the brain and improves your concentration. Finally, it can help you sleep better at night and might even improve your mental health.

One of the new guidelines is to have the students spread out as much as possible. The teachers have placed white pieces of tape on the floor every eight feet to give the students more room to move around in. Students and teachers must have their mask on the entire time even during activities. Because some of the new activities are not traditional sports, it is very common for students to be afraid to try something new. "Don't be embarrassed because you can't do the same workout as everyone else," commented Mr. Stoner. "Try your best, and you will benefit the most. If you keep working on the exercises, you will get stronger and it will get much easier," he added.

Since students aren't allowed to use the locker rooms this year, teachers encourage them to wear clothes that are comfy and moveable. "Students should wear tennis shoes that are supportive on days that they have phys. ed," Mr. Stoner said. He thinks that shoes such as vans and converse aren't supportive enough. Most students follow the dress code, but if they were to wear something unsafe or inappropriate, they would have to sit out for that class period. Students are allowed to pack a pair of shoes if they don't want to wear them all day.

Under the current circumstances, everyone does do the same activities, but if things were normal, there would be some activities that would vary between genders. Mrs. Kuharic said she feels that students like the class. "It gives them a chance to get off of their computers," she said. It also gives students the opportunity to get stronger, healthier, and feel successful.

Both teachers wish they could be doing swimming and other sports that they would normally do, and they really missed letting the students choose from different activities.

Health class differs between all the grades. Seventh and eighth graders are working out of their Life Skills workbooks and participating in lectures and/or videos. Health class is included with gym for them, while ninth graders have health class everyday for 90 days separate from gym. The ninth graders have a more varied curriculum than the seventh and eighth graders.

Health class is important because the lessons are focused on drug/alcohol prevention and developing life skills do deal with issues students might face. Mrs. Kuharic said, "We talk about self-image, making good decisions, resolving conflicts, resisting peer pressure, communication skills, and social skills. These skills don't always come easy to students, so it is important to teach and practice these skills that they will use throughout their lives."



TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS TESTING

By Maggie Bodamer

There have been many new changes to the way school works this school year, and one of the things is testing. With testing now on computers, teachers have had to develop new methods on how to maintain test integrity and limit cheating as much as possible. Butler Area School District uses an app called GoGuardian which allows the teachers to see what students are doing on their computers and allows teachers to block websites to help keep students focussed. As a result, many teachers use GoGuardian to help prevent cheating.

Teachers utilize assessments to evaluate student growth and to recognize re-teaching opportunities. This school year, teachers are mostly giving tests on Google Docs, Google Forms and Google Slides. These methods enable students to easily submit their work from home and school. Google Forms allows teachers to lock a student's screen in one tab to help prevent cheating. Also, many teachers have started, instead of using big tests, using small quizzes. The smaller quizzes allow teachers to see what topics a student is struggling with more easily.

Teachers used to be able to walk around the classroom monitoring students' needs, but now, due to coronavirus and maintaining six feet of social distance, it is more difficult. Go Guardian helps to alleviate this problem. One teacher commented, "I am able to see exactly where a student is having difficulties. I can see when students are with me or are not, and I can quickly and easily see students' work." When using GoGuardian, they can look at the student's computer screen and see if a student is taking a longer time on a certain question or see if they are doing the right assignment. GoGuardian also allows the teacher to comment directly on a particular student's computer screen; therefore, teachers don't have to worry about stopping the whole class to help someone.

While many teachers think GoGuardian is very useful and beneficial, they struggle to find time to use it while teaching. With having two computer screens going, one to monitor the Google Meet chat and another to present their lesson to their class, it is challenging for them to monitor another screen. Although, many teachers, when they get the chance, love using GoGuardian, and most teachers use it daily for their classes.

Testing hasn't become more difficult for teachers now, it is only a new way of doing it. It can take around 30 minutes to grade each class period's tests normally. However, one teacher stated, "If it is multiple choice, the program can check those even faster than I would ever be able to. But it takes so much longer to grade anything else." Using Google Forms can allow teachers to spend less time grading the assignments. Teachers are able to have Google Forms grade the assignment for them, so then it is already checked for them, and students can see their score immediately after submitting their test, providing immediate feedback.



TESTING CONT.

The teachers gave some advice to new teachers that are joining this environment. One thing they shared was that they recommend using smaller tests more often to help make sure students are on track. Another thing the teachers recommended for testing is to do the tests in person for the students that come to school and span the tests over two separate days. Lastly, they recommend using GoGuardian to make sure students are paying attention and are participating in class.

Although dealing with a new environment can be challenging, having a new way of maintaining test integrity has taught the teachers many new things that can help their classes. Programs like GoGuardian and all the Google platforms have helped make instruction easier for teachers by allowing them to make sure the students are paying attention even when they aren't there in person.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

By Christina Wise

Staying connected to friends and family is more important than ever. Being near family and friends is important for happiness and overall health. Luckily, there are plenty of ways you can stay connected to those you love, especially when they are not physically close.

Mailing letters and cards to family members is a nice way to stay connected. Research shows the act of writing by hand can give helpful physical and mental benefits. From improving learning abilities to fostering a more positive outlook on life, mailing letters shows that you care to take the time to write them by hand. Unlike a quick text message, you have only one chance to send a handwritten message. You can not easily do it over, so you have to learn how important it is not to let it go to waste.

Celebrating family celebrations online can help keep you connected while keeping your distance. Send a custom video to your family member with a heartfelt message. Make the video message memorable, something they can cherish for many years to come.

Sharing recipes and cooking together virtually or even eating dinner together online connects the family. Try to make a family "cook club." Each week, share new recipes and quality time together. Share your favorite cookie recipe or lassana. Student Kylee Goss said, "My mom and I made hot chocolate bombs." Learn family recipes and teach them to others as well. Food helps make a strong friend and family connection. Student Ayda Revitsky added, "I love my family's cookie recipes and their desserts recipes." We are lucky that staying at home does not have to stop us from eating and cooking together. Set up a time to share a meal virtually with your loved ones. Have a virtual brunch, lunch, or dinner. Make the table; put down the tablecloth, and enjoy a simple online meal.

Visiting your favorite vacation location virtually is a great way to stay connected. There are many online museums that offer virtual tours and online collections for you to explore from your home. Websites such as "Google Arts and Culture" are excellent resources for finding virtual tours from all over the world. They are available 24/7, so you can sync up with family or friends whenever you want.

STAYING CONNECTED CONT.

Stay connected by hosting a virtual game night with family and friends. Turn your cameras on when you are playing games. It is easier to communicate over a Google Meet or a Zoom meeting while you are playing those. Have a fun-filled evening with friends and family to get your game on. Give the ones you love a good reason to smile. Student Kylee Goss said, "We either play Life, a card game, or Just Dance on the Nintendo Switch." Websites such as "Houseparty" is a video chat application that allows up to eight people to talk at one time. This app also allows you to play games such as Heads Up, Chips, or Guac.

Hosting a virtual book club keeps you updated on new books. Book clubs bring together friends and family and learn about new authors or genres. Ask family and friends to get together virtually to discuss a book as a group. Other book clubs also exist for you to join as well to connect with people all over the world.

Finally, watching your favorite shows and movies together virtually is now possible. Just because we are apart, distancing does not have to keep a space between you, your family and friends, and your favorite shows. Student Ayda Revitsky said, "We all watched the football game together online a couple months ago." Streaming services like Netflix Party make it easy to watch shows together across time zones with features like group chat and synchronized video playback.

Being around family and friends is the best solution for happiness and overall well being. Now you have plenty of ways to connect with the ones you care about while keeping your distance. Never stop trying to stay connected with friends and family.

*Information was compiled for this article from <https://familyreviewguide.com/stay-connected-zoom/> and <https://www.westernunion.com/blog/stay-connected-with-family-and-friends-around-the-world/>



VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS AND LABS OFFER HANDS-ON LEARNING

By Sydney Zurzolo

This past year, the BIHS students and teachers have had to learn and teach from home in isolation, and wanting to go places has been a common theme for everyone as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have been seeking creative ways to keep students safe while still engaging them in exciting, interactive learning opportunities. Virtual field trips and labs have allowed the Butler Intermediate students to “go” somewhere and learn from a distance. Some teachers, including Mr. Cochran and Mrs. Sankey and others, have done some virtual field trips and/or labs as an interesting approach to teaching.

Mr. Cochran teaches history and TV and video production through the Enrichment Studies Program. He held a virtual field trip to two different manufacturers for the What's So Cool About Manufacturing contest, one field trip in December and the other in January. Mr. Cochran assigned the students to take notes and to make a video about the company that they visited. Mr. Cochran said, “I believe that the students enjoyed the experience, but it would have been a better one if they would have been able to attend the trip in person instead of virtually.”

Another teacher, Mrs. Sankey, teaches eighth grade science. She held a virtual lab, assigning students a link to the lab and a data sheet for them to complete while performing the lab. The lab was to help the students better understand concepts presented in their class and to see how they are applied in real-world situations. The lab reports were graded on complete, accurate answers. Students were believed to have enjoyed the virtual lab. Mrs. Sankey said, “During a live experience, I have the opportunity to watch my students and offer assistance immediately when needed. Either way, the lab helps the students to better understand concepts presented in class and to see how they are applied in real-world situations.”

Some teachers have been utilizing virtual field trips for years. Casey Zurzolo, a student of the Butler Area District, experienced a virtual field trip two years ago when her ninth grade history teacher, Mrs. Porter, used virtual reality goggles for her class. They went to The Great Wall of China and Ancient Rome. This approach to teaching allowed the students to see how Ancient Rome was built. Casey said, “I thought it was really fun, especially because I like history.”

Virtual field trips and labs have taken a new approach to teaching. This has allowed students to see things from a different perspective. Teachers often use virtual field trips and labs to assign things that would help the students grow skills that reality couldn't teach them. Students have been able to “go” places that they wouldn't be able to go to in reality being the reason why some teachers encourage this form of teaching.



SCHOOL IMPLEMENTS NEW SANITATION GUIDELINES

by Olivia Flanigan

The state of Pennsylvania has provided schools with new guidance on cleaning practices and safe operation of schools during the coronavirus pandemic. Before reopening, Butler Area School District designed a comprehensive safety plan that addressed these new expectations, and the custodial staff have been working extra hard to keep all surfaces free of COVID.

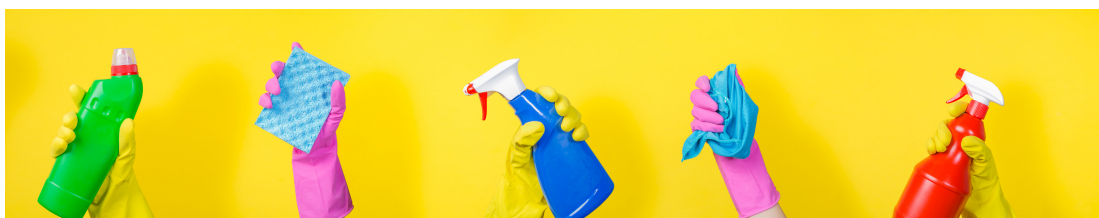
For most of the second quarter and part of the third, students and teachers adjusted to the cohort schedule in order to maintain social distancing. Recently, all students returned for five days a week, which is great for keeping students engaged and learning but provides additional cleaning challenges. According to Mr. Dobransky, "Since the rate of community spread has gone down dramatically, we hope to stay in-person five days a week."

The night-time custodians go through the school and clean very thoroughly. They clean the rooms by taking the garbage out, straightening the desks, and then they start sanitizing. After sanitizing, they wipe off chairs, tables, and desks with disinfectant sanitizer. Then, they wipe off high-touch areas, such as light switches, pencil sharpeners, door knobs, etc. The floors are dust-mopped every night and wet-mopped as often as needed. Additional dusting is done as needed as well. Mrs. Marcia Marshall, one of the night custodians, commented, "We are constantly busy, and we do the best we can to keep everything clean for the students and teachers."

Teachers clean their classroom desks during their lunch period so that the cleaner has time to activate on the surfaces before it is wiped clean. At night, teachers flip a tag on their door from green to red to indicate that their room's desks need to be sanitized again. If a tag is not flipped, however, the custodians have still been cleaning the desks, just as a precaution.

The day-time custodians have different duties than the night-time custodians. Mr. John Tirk, one of the day-time custodians, described a normal day: "A typical day is very busy. I start off by cleaning the restrooms and all the entrance ways, vacuuming the carpet, and delivering supplies to wherever they are needed." He added, "In between each period, I help to sanitize all cafeteria and library tables. I also gather and take out all the garbage from all lunch areas and then dust and mop the hallways."

Whenever the school was closed for three days for a deep clean, the custodians did a repeated and more intense clean than a normal night clean. Now that we are back to five days a week in-person instruction, a deep clean will be done if anyone who uses that area tests positive for COVID. Classrooms are cleaned with the exact same product called VitalOxide for sanitizing and a product called NDC for disinfecting. Mrs. Marshall added, "I feel that sanitizing or disinfecting on a regular basis helps to keep our building safe and clean."



STUDENTS ENRICHED IN ESP

By Brook Ellis

At the Intermediate High School, the Enrichment Studies Program, or ESP, is an option for students who excel in the classroom, providing valuable learning opportunities in a variety of subject areas.

Students are admitted into the program in seventh and eighth grade based on their GPA, or Grade Point Average. Dr. DeThomas, one of the program's coordinators, sorts the GPA's of all of the incoming students from sixth and seventh grade on a spreadsheet. The top 240 students on the list have the opportunity to enroll in ESP. Therefore, there is no certain GPA requirement; the cut-off varies from year to year.

Once admitted into the program, students schedule for three different trimester courses for their assigned ESP class period. The program offers 16 different options for classes. One of the classes is Tornado Newsletter, which is taught by Mrs. Minch. She got the idea from her college journalism class which she then adapted to make the Tornado Connection Newsletter Class. She has been teaching it for 23 years. In Tornado Connection, students write a series of practice articles to prepare to write their published articles at the end of the course. Their published articles eventually are included in the online edition of the Tornado Connection, written for parents of seventh through ninth grade students and found on the school website.

Mrs. Minch had to do a lot of extra work when it came to changing the whole style of the class onto Google Classroom. "Many of our activities were group-based activities, but I think that students probably grow more as writers now that we use Google classroom. Overall, I am happy with the new organization of the class," she commented. Mrs. Minch enjoys teaching this class because she has an opportunity to work with seventh graders, and it is different from the rest of her day as an eighth grade English teacher.

Another class available for students in the program is Civil Rights Movement, taught by Mrs. Behrens. She has been teaching this class for about six years. Students that take her class learn about how we got to equality and how we are not quite there yet. According to Mrs. Behrens, "It is important to teach students about race relations." Usually, students work with partners or with a group, which has made this year a lot different since they can't work with other people anymore. In her class, students can learn to feel more comfortable talking about tough conversations since they have to talk about very mature topics. In this class, they learn through talking, reading, and videos; after all three of those students have a clear picture of what they are learning about. According to Mrs. Behrens, students who enjoy history usually like this class.

If a student is enrolled in ESP in eighth grade, they will have to take geography in one of their three ESP classes. The geography class was originally created by Mrs. Porter, but was later taken over by Mr. Niederberger. He is a social studies teacher and has traveled to many different places. He has been to China, Canada, and also traveled across Europe. In his class, students can gain more knowledge on where things are globally. At the beginning and the end of his class, the students have to draw a map. Students show a lot of growth in drawing the map at the end of the class. The geography class this trimester has been difficult since students spent much of the time at home. There is a little extra work for Mr. Niederberger when it comes to grading maps this year. According to Mr. Niederberger, "Everyday can be a little different."

ESP is a great opportunity for students since many students learn information they wouldn't usually learn in a regular classroom. It helps many students further their education in diverse areas of interest.

SCHOOL MAKES CHANGES TO TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

By Jackson Morgus and Brett Vietmeier

Staff members involved in the transportation department in our school district have been adapting to COVID-19 regulations this school year.

Mrs. MaryCate Mason, started as the Director of Transportation in July, 2019. Before she was hired as the Director of Transportation, she was educated in geography and cartography. Becoming a part of the transportation operations at Butler seemed like a great choice to her because of her interests. "It is a perfect fit for me with the students and the school," she said. Mrs. Mason believes that the parents have been a huge help to the transportation department in her last two years. "Everyone I talk to, I appreciate," she said. The teachers also have assisted her with helping the students get to the correct buses. She would definitely recommend the job to anyone else. "I can't really complain about my job," Mrs. Mason stated.

According to Mrs. Mason, a lot of things have changed in the day to day operations of the transportation department due to the pandemic. She said that changes have been made to how they sanitize, how they route buses, and how they enforce student rules, such as masking.

Mrs. Mason explained that the biggest issue is the reduction of bus drivers. "Many of our bus drivers are in a demographic that is very concerned about COVID-19. They are stepping back until they get a vaccination," she said. "Since we are running a high risk schedule, the cohort helped by creating more space for buses and people when the Butler community numbers were at their worst," she added. But even when times are tough, Mrs. Mason said that she is grateful for every school and the school district. "They're always on board to help each other," she said.



Mr. Mike Bester is a bus driver for Valley Lines Transportation. He has been working for them since 2008. He has really enjoyed his job for all his years he has worked there. "I would recommend this job to anyone," he said. However, he believes that there are some skills that you have to have to be a good bus driver. "You have to keep your eyes on the road and also make sure that everything is going okay in the back of the bus. It is very stressful," he said. "You have to have patience and good driving skills," he added. He sometimes is concerned about driving buses in the morning. He said that the traffic can be terrible and the weather can be worse than the traffic. Overall, he really likes being a bus driver and would not change it for the world.

According to Mr. Bester, Valley Lines training really stresses safety, and this year especially, that includes cleaning. He said that there is protocol to sanitize the bus after every route.

TRANSPORTATION CONT.

Since we are in a pandemic, he wears a mask on the bus and never takes it off until the kids are off. When a student does not have a mask on on the bus, he will simply hand them a mask. "It is never really necessary to make a big deal out of it," he said.

Mrs. Kayla Moore is another bus driver for Valley Lines Transportation. She has been working for them for four years. She was expecting a child, so she quit her job at Sheetz because she thought bus driving was a safer job. One of her favorite things about the bus has to do with her freedom to decorate the bus. This Christmas, she decorated the bus with Christmas-themed stickers, such as stocking stickers. She admits that her job can be stressful at times. One time, she could not turn her bus around. It took her 15 minutes to get out of her predicament with the help of the mechanics. It also stresses her out when students do not sit in their assigned seats. "It confuses me with who is who," she said. She really likes being a bus driver and appreciates the students she transports.

According to Mrs. Moore, the students are behaving the same during the pandemic as they did before, and masks are just another rule to enforce. "Some students try to sit in the back and slide down in the seat to remove their masks." Other than just protocol and rule changes, some mood changes have happened as well. For instance, she said that the teachers have been nicer this year than other years. She also said that she gets more elementary school students some days.

Many people have been impacted by COVID-19, but transportation is still running strong and hopes are high for the future of school transportation.



SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL PREPARE FOR SEASON

By Madison Schubert

Butler offers a variety of sports in the spring. For grades 7-12, students can participate in softball, boys' and girls' track and field, and boys' volleyball. For grades 9-12, students can choose baseball, boys' and girls' lacrosse, and boys' tennis. Let's take a closer look at softball, coached by Caitlin Baxter, and baseball, coached by Dan Buzzard.

Caitlin Baxter has been coaching softball for the last two seasons at Butler. She played softball in high school and four years of college softball at Slippery Rock as well. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, Butler did not play any games last season. This year, tryouts will be held in March. The coaches use a rubric and try to pick enough girls for two teams. The number of girls varies this year. As of now, no alterations have been made to the upcoming season. The team will follow all school guidelines with masks, social distancing, and completing the athletic waiver forms.

SEASON CONT.

Coach Baxter enjoys helping the team on and off the field. "I care about my girls on the team and want them to succeed in all aspects of life. I do anything I can to help them achieve their goals," she said.

Another sport being offered this spring is baseball coached by Daniel Buzzard. This will be his fifth year coaching and his third year as the head coach for the freshman team. He grew up playing baseball through college. He always wanted to be a teacher and coach while being a teacher. Open gyms are being offered right now. His advice to guys who want to make the team: "Play as much as possible. Get bigger, stronger, and faster by playing other sports or lifting. Long toss is very important as well." There will be three days of tryouts in which the whole staff will evaluate the players. Usually they will take between 15-18 players on the team. Because of COVID, players must have their own helmets, gloves, and bats. The district requires the normal athletic fee paid to the athletic office. All Covid-19 precautions will be in place in accordance with the guidelines set by the PIAA and our school. The district will do their best to ensure that the players are "safe" as possible while at practices and games.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the other spring sports in the Butler School District, they can log into the Butler Area School District website or contact the athletic apartment.



CHURCH HOSTS TNL

By Nicolas Monteleone

The Community Alliance Church, in Butler, hosts a program called Thursday Night Live, or TNL, every Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for students in sixth through eighth grade to play games and learn lessons from the Bible. Any student can attend, even if you don't attend Community Alliance Church.

The program is run by Evan Miranda, the youth ministries lead director. The night starts off with a game or activity in the upstairs gym. Some games include dodgeball, kickball, volleyball with a giant inflatable ball, and much more. One of the most popular games is called bubble soccer. The game plays just like normal soccer, except everyone is in an inflatable suit, and your goal is to knock other people over while trying to play a normal soccer game.

After the games, everyone goes downstairs for a raffle. When you get downstairs, you are given a ticket which you save for it to be drawn. Once tickets are drawn, the chosen players will go up onto the stage and play a game such as guessing song lyrics, eating competitions, and many more. The winner of the game will win a prize, ranging from candy to gift cards.

TNL CONT.

After this, a student band plays 2-3 worship songs. Like Olivia Flanigan said, "The band is really good and has some catchy, fun music." Then, a volunteer speaker will speak about how they have applied the Bible to their own life and experiences, and how you can apply it to your life too. Following this, students will break off into small groups, discuss the lesson further, and relate it to their own lives. Afterwards is open gym, where you are free to do whatever you want while you wait for your parents/guardians to take you home. However, this is not all that TNL has to offer.

Every winter and every spring there is an event which is called an "all-nighter." This event is split into two nights. There is an all boy's all-nighter, and a girl's all-nighter. At this event, games take place all night long. There are dodgeball tournaments, kickball tournaments, and bubble soccer tournaments set up so that the winning team will win prizes, just like in the ticket drawing games. Food, snacks, treats, and drinks are also provided throughout the night. This event will usually take place from the hours of 9 p.m.-9 a.m. The all -nighters are a full 12 hours of games, friends, and fun. If you do not want to stay up all night, there are designated rooms where you can sleep if you are tired.

Students who attend TNL also will participate in events where they give to those in need. At Christmastime, everyone will be provided with a box to fill and supplies to fill it with. The box is hand-filled with toys, clothing, soap, and more necessities. After a box is filled, students write a handwritten note to wish the recipient a merry Christmas, and the box is shipped off to a community that needs it. Currently, a program is being held called Pack-A-Barrel where volunteers fill a barrel with essentials to be shipped all the way to Africa. There is a list of items that you can bring on their website, www.butlercac.org.

TNL is a great after school activity to be involved in if you want to make friends or share your experiences with others. It has a very welcoming community, and is worth thinking about. A student at the BIHS, Rylee Plugh, said, "I love it. We play games and then worship."

LIBRARIAN PROVIDES CHROMEBOOK HELP

By Alyssa Cornell

Most everyone agrees that the switch to one-to-one technology for secondary students has been an important educational step for Butler. However, with new technology comes frustrations. Most students and teachers at Butler Intermediate agree that Mrs. Eckert is the perfect person to ask when they are having issues with technology.

Students often ask: "What should students do when their screen freezes or glitches?" According to Ms. Eckert, "The number one rule is to hold down the power button and the arrow down button, and it should power off." She said when students power off their chromebook, it restarts and will give their chromebook a chance to refresh itself.

Another common problem for students is slow internet connection. Students often ask: "When our internet is slow, is there a way to make it work faster or speed it up?" This question might be common for those who don't have great internet connection when students are online or at home. She said when that happens, you can clear your browser history or if it is just your internet being slow, then sit by your router. That might help your internet connection.

HELP CONT.

In addition, students are hesitant to interrupt teachers in the middle of a lesson. They often ask: "When should we come to teachers when students' computers start acting up?" Mrs Eckert thinks that chromebooks are new and usually work well, but when they do act up horribly or if things are off by a lot, then students might want to come to a teacher. In particular, if it is a simple problem, such as forgetting to charge the chromebook, always ask. Teachers have a chromebook too and have a cord students could borrow in a pinch.

The most common malfunction appears to be: "How do students fix their screen when it is blank?" Her response to the question was, "Reset your chromebook if it goes blank or if your chromebook light is orange on the left side. Then you need to charge your chromebook with the charger until the light on the left hand side turns white. When the light turns white is when you know that your chromebook is charged."



STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS SHARE VIEWS ON YEAR

By Tyler Merten and Ryan Miller

This school year has been very different one than most. Students, parents, and teachers have adapted to new technology, new ways of communicating, new pandemic regulations, and new stressors.

The students' views are very important because if students are really dissatisfied, everyone's job becomes harder. Overall, the students are pleased with the new technology because it is more convenient and more flexible, but they want it to be more reliable. For example, Jack Von Buren said, "Some students feel like using computers and learning online has made them more independent. However, I feel like Google Classroom is a pain sometimes because the turn in button doesn't always work."

During the cohort model part of the school year, some students felt it was easier to be distracted, but others felt they were less distracted because they set up a learning space in their room. Jackson Morgus, who has a twin brother, Wyatt, said, "I set my chromebook up right next to my brother, and there's no distractions." Some students indicated that they feel a closer bond to their parents and siblings because everyone has spent more time at home. The bottom line, though, is that students can't wait to get back to a more normal school setting. Many students love the fact they can go somewhere and make new friends and be social. Jackson Morgus said, "Because it is a different year, I have a totally different schedule since last year and have been able to make new friends."

VIEWS CONT.

With the new pathway, a lot of students are feeling farther away from older friends because they see them less than they did before. They also miss some of the more hands-on activities they used to have in classes like science and gym. With all of this, some students believe the school year has gotten a little less stressful and some feel it has gotten more stressful. Some of the students also feel as if the teachers are feeling a little more stressed as well.

Parents have also felt the impact of this very unique school year. Technology has been particularly frustrating for some. Mrs. Tracy Miller commented, "I wish the computers were more reliable for the students' sake of not having to hope it works today." The parents have had to deal with a lot of wifi problems on the chromebook.

Some parents have also noticed their child's lack of motivation towards completing assignments, while others haven't. The parents also have to worry about the activities for the students resuming or being cancelled. As a result of changes in learning schedules and extracurricular activity schedules, parents notice that their children are often bored and sometimes a bit depressed. Mr. Dan Merten commented, "When students become bummed out about school specifically, that is a pain in the butt." Like parents, teachers are concerned about the emotional well-being of their students. Some students are struggling academically more than in past years, and teachers continually try to encourage them along.

Teachers have adapted their teaching methods this year to allow for social distancing. Many feel that teaching online and in person simultaneously has slowed down the delivery of their instruction, but they have made it work as best they can. The cohort portion of the school year was definitely the most challenging for the staff. According to Mrs. Walker, an eighth grade family consumer science teacher, "The toughest part was it made it very difficult to get to know my students." Overwhelming, the teachers agree that the best part of teaching is interacting with students and getting to know them.

Teachers admit that they were not sure about some of the new regulations that the school put into place this year. For example, Mrs. Minch commented that she was hesitant about the new hallway traffic patterns. She said, "At first, it just seemed really inconvenient, but I feel like it has really reduced the possibility of conflicts in the hallway because everyone is moving in the same direction. Now, I hope we keep it!" For the most part, the teachers feel that the adaptations have made the school a safe environment, but some feel that the students still get too close to one another. "There are some kids who just don't seem to understand that they cannot be close to others," Mrs. Heinack said.

Students aren't the only ones feeling a little disconnected this year. For teachers and staff, staying separate from other adults in the building is unusual, with meetings on Google Meet and the requirements to limit how many staff members can eat in one location.

Communication between parents and teachers has also changed this year. If parents choose to receive email updates from Google Classroom, they receive parent summaries from each class weekly. This, however, can be turned off.

VIEWS CONT.

Several teachers commented that they have communicated with more parents this year, either by calling or email, than they ever have before. Students seem to be more aware of their grades because they can see missed assignments in Google Classroom and on Tyler. "This year, students are more likely to email me and ask about assignments, and I think that is great. Before, they would be too nervous to speak up. Now, they can inquire about their grades themselves, which is nice," commented Mrs. Minch.

On the positive side, most teachers agree that technology does make grades easier. A stack of papers is a lot slower to grade than grading on the computer and directly entering the grades digitally. One exception is probably math, where students have to take pictures and attach them in Google Classroom, making it harder for teachers to see than when the work is on actual paper. In addition, assignments are easily available for absent students to access without having to wait and ask the teacher, and digital assignments are hard to misplace.

All three groups agreed on one thing: it has been a strange year. The good news is that we are working together to make it a positive experience.



WHY SHOULD YOU ADOPT A PET?

By Kylee Goss

Over the last year, many people have added furry friends to their lives and families. Here are a few stories from people who have recently adopted.

Ms. Ferrari, a reading teacher at the Butler Intermediate High School, recently adopted a dog named Comet from the Butler Humane Society. Mrs. Ferrari said, "I started visiting the dogs at the Butler County Humane Society because I was heartbroken and greatly missing my beloved Chow-Chow who died a few months earlier due to illness. I honestly didn't think I would be adopting a dog. I had been looking online to purchase another Chow or a small lap dog, but I had decided it wouldn't be right away. A friend had suggested that visiting the animals in the shelter might make me happy and heal from the loss. My dog Chowder was like a child to me, just like the two Chows who were my treasured pets before him. So I started visiting the kennel in November of 2019 two to three times a week. During the second week of visits, a big black and white head pressed up against the kennel door of his cage captured my attention and my heart! That's when I fell in love with a huge Pitbull named Comet."

PET CONT.

Mrs. Ferrari did not want a dog originally, but when she saw Comet, she changed her mind. They ended up connecting and gained trust with each other. Comet would bark every time he saw her, even when she was inside and he was outside.

According to Ms. Ferrari, people who adopt pets should have certain qualities. She said, "Shelter and rescue animals require a foster parent or owner who is exceptionally patient, kind, affectionate, and committed to the task of acclimating the pet to its new home. In Comet's case, he was brought to the shelter 22 months earlier by three animal control officers, he was terrified, he had broken all the blood vessels in his eyes from barking, was underfed, and extremely wary of people. I visited Comet for months and slowly built a bond of trust. The animals brought to the amazing, no-kill BCHS have been abandoned, lost, starved, surrendered, sick, physically neglected, abused, or unloved. In Comet's case, he was aggressive, and because of his size, could be considered dangerous." Mrs. Ferrari was very patient with him and worked with him very well. That is why he is the dog he is today.

Comet was at the kennel for a very long time. However, because of Mrs. Ferrari, Comet finally got to be loved and have a home of his own. She also enjoys adopting and had great experience at the shelter. She said, "I had decades of experience with dogs I had purchased, but absolutely no experience with shelter dogs! Eventually, I got to know the director, the vet techs, the kennel staff, and the volunteers at the Humane Society. I knew all of the dogs by name and I looked excitedly forward to my visits after school several times a week. Month by month, I watched every dog be adopted except for Comet. Pitbulls are a common breed at shelters. Only Tilly, the Pitbull, had been there a few months longer than Comet, and then even she was adopted. I wanted to adopt this gorgeous black & white Pitbull, but my husband said Comet was too big, might hurt me, had special needs, was a food guarder, had aggressive tendencies, and would be too much work for a couple nearing retirement age. I was not going to give up, though. I knew I was the perfect fit for this dog and I knew Ray would fall in love with Comet, too, and he did." Even though her husband wasn't on board with adopting Comet, to this day they are best friends.

Even though this was Mrs. Ferrari's first time adopting a dog, she was wrong about what she thought about the dogs at the shelter. She said, "I bought two Chows from breeders and had an older, retired Chow-Chow show dog given to me. I had this preconceived notion that all the dogs at shelters had problems; therefore, I never even considered a Humane Society pet. Boy, was I wrong! Everyone who works at the shelter adores dogs and cats! Because of this, the most difficult of dogs, like Comet, respond to unconditional love and the top notch care the staff provides in a facility that operates only on donations and fundraisers. You will never find a dog more appreciative than a shelter dog! Comet adopted me before I ever adopted him." She really never considered adopting a dog, but she is glad she did.

When adopting a pet, you have to make an important decision. She said, "The Humane Society has all applicants fill out a lengthy application where the expectations of being a 'pet parent' are crystal clear. The BCHS makes the final decision after several home visits. (Pitbulls, Rottweilers, and other large breeds require home visits, but not all small to medium breeds require home visits.) If the breed is not right for your family, home, yard, house, apartment, etc., the BCHS will deny the request to adopt that particular animal, but suggest a better fit for you.

PET CONT.

They do follow-up home visits post-adoption as well. The Humane Society thoroughly ensures this doesn't happen through the steps of their adoption process. The 'foster to adopt' step is an important and necessary part of pet adoption. If after the adoption, one can't keep the pet, the Humane Society requests that you give the animal back to them and not give it away or sell it."

Ms. Ferrari couldn't say enough about her experience with the Butler Humane Society. "When there are kennel vacancies, the Butler Humane Society travels to Tennessee, the Carolinas, and other southern states where homeless pets abound or states affected by natural disasters to transport homeless and injured pets to Butler. The BCHS is a NO-KILL shelter so they literally save animals' lives," she said.

Christine Sundry has also had positive experiences adopting from local shelters. "I had wanted to get a dog, and I knew that adoption was ideal because it would help an animal in need," she said. One day she was driving past a local shelter, Pet Friends Inc. in Irwin, PA, and they were having an adoption day. Her daughter asked if they could look. "The dog I was looking at was the first one I saw. Her name was Bella, and my daughter hugged Bella and said she wanted her," Ms. Sundry said. They ended up filling out an adoption form regarding Bella, and it took a week to get her to her new home. At the shelter where she adopted Bella, they had some rules of who could adopt her. According to the shelter, the family needed to have no small children, their own home, and someone who would be home with Bella during the day. Her boss had to submit a letter telling them what her work schedule was and how much she made. This was to make sure she could take her to the vet. They did a criminal background check, looked at her house and wanted to know if she originally had a dog. They called and talked to the vet to make sure she took care of her previous dog. She also needed to microchip Bella before she got to go home. She had to always keep up on her vaccines, and medicines.

She thought the experience was excellent, and she got a good dog and made her feel good that she gave a dog a home. Also, she liked how they made sure the dog was going to a good home. She thinks that adopting is better than getting them from a breeder because there are thousands of animals that need homes.

Ms. Sundry described the process of adopting a pet. She said, " One, make the personal decision to adopt a pet. Two, visit shelters to meet pets to make the decision if it fits your family. Three, go through the application and approval process. Four, bring your animal home." She would recommend both places she adopted from.

She also adopted another dog from Pet Adoption League, in Yukon, Pa. Although she had excellent experience with both shelters, Pet Adoption League was less strict, and Pet Friends was more strict which she thought it was better because there was no risk of a dog going to a bad home. She put a lot of planning into her adoptions. For example, you have to have a lot of space, fence installed, financial planning, vet appointment planning, planning her work schedule to be home with them while they are adjusting. Finally the costs for adopting can be different. Christine had to pay for adoption fees for both dogs. For example, Bella was \$120 in 2012, and Mikey was adopted for \$200 in 2017.

PET CONT.

So the question remains: Is your family ready to adopt a pet? According to Ms. Thrower, who works at Butler Humane Society, "BCHS has a website where we include information and photographs about each animal that is up for adoption. This way people have a chance to learn more about them before they inquire. Once they decide to apply for an animal, we review their application and work on matching up each applicant with the animal we think would best fit their needs. Part of this involves having an in-person introduction with the animal and adopter, as well as an introduction with any other pets that live in the adopter's home. We also make sure to answer any questions we can about the animal's behaviors, past, personality, and medical care. We find the more informed adopters are, the more comfortable they feel." They make sure the person who wants to adopt is getting the pet they want so the pet doesn't go back to the shelter.

She also explains what planning you need to be able to do to adopt a pet. She said, "Make sure you are ready for the responsibility of having a pet. Cleaning, feeding, house training, etc. Make sure you can afford a pet (medical care, food, grooming etc) Finally, make sure you have time to spend with a pet (walking them, socializing with them etc)." If you are interested in adding a pet to your family, consider adoption from a local shelter.

